

## **Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 128**

### **RESOLUTION CHAPTER 70**

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 128—Relative to the Buffalo Soldiers.

[Filed with Secretary of State June 9, 2016.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

SCR 128, Mendoza. The Buffalo Soldiers.

This measure would honor the Buffalo Soldiers for changing the face of the United States Armed Forces forever through their record of unique accomplishments.

WHEREAS, On July 28, 1866, by an act of the United States Congress, African American men were allowed to join the post-Civil War army in special segregated units — the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments of the United States Army; and

WHEREAS, Comprised of former slaves, freemen, and black Civil War soldiers, the Buffalo Soldiers were the first African Americans to serve in the United States Army during peacetime. During the latter period of the nineteenth century, the soldiers of the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments were assigned to Fort Riley, Kansas, and other areas of the Midwest, where they endeavored to maintain order between Native Americans and the settlers arriving in those areas, built forts and roads, patrolled borders, and protected mail coaches and railroad construction crews; and

WHEREAS, Out of respect for their courage and fighting spirit, as well as for the dark curly appearance of their hair and the thick coats made from buffalo hide that these soldiers wore during winter, the Native Americans of the Midwestern plains honored the members of the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments with the nickname of “Buffalo Soldiers”; and

WHEREAS, When the Indian Wars ended in the 1890s, the Buffalo Soldiers went on to fight in Cuba during the 1898 Spanish-American War and thereafter acted as rangers in Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks; and

WHEREAS, The Buffalo Soldiers of the regular African American army regiments were among the first to serve as park rangers in the newly created National Park Service; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 500 Buffalo Soldiers from the 9th, 10th, 24th, and 25th Regiments served in Yosemite and nearby Sequoia National Parks, with duties ranging from evicting poachers and timber thieves to extinguishing forest fires; and

WHEREAS, The accomplishments of the Buffalo Soldiers as park rangers include building the first trail to the top of Mount Whitney in Sequoia National Park, building the first arboretum in Yosemite National Park, and

clearing miles of trails and building roads into the national parks for visitor enjoyment; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Charles Young, the third African American graduate of West Point, served as acting military superintendent of Sequoia National Park in 1903; and

WHEREAS, Despite the Buffalo Soldiers wearing the uniform of the United States Army, performing their duties presented challenges to overcome due to racial prejudice. Buffalo Soldiers serving in Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks had to fulfill their duties using perseverance and diplomacy; and

WHEREAS, During World War II, members of the Buffalo Soldiers branched out and formed into famous units, including the 24th and 25th Infantry Divisions, the famed Tuskegee Airmen that included the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the larger 332nd Fighter “Red Tails” Group, the 761st Tank Battalion of the Third Army, plus nearly the entire 92nd Infantry Division; and

WHEREAS, Due to Executive Order 9981 issued in 1948 by President Harry Truman eliminating racial segregation and discrimination in the United States Armed Forces, the last all-black units disbanded during the first half of the 1950s, and, in 2005, the nation’s oldest living Buffalo Soldier, First Sergeant Mark Matthews, passed away in Washington, D.C., at 111 years of age; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring,* That the Legislature honors the Buffalo Soldiers for changing the face of the United States Armed Forces forever through their record of unique accomplishments, which testify to their skill, discipline, integrity, and heroism, and recognizes and thanks their families and descendants for sharing an inspiring legacy that speaks to the sense of excellence, potential, and patriotism shared by all Americans; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.